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ABSTRACT

Internal-External Locus of Control refers to the extent to which persons perceive contingency relationships between their actions and subsequent outcomes. Those who believe they have some control over payoffs in their lives are called "Internals." "Externals," on the other hand, believe consequences are directed by agents outside of themselves. Beginning in 1968 on the campus of Penn State University and continuing through to the present, the author has assisted in or conducted a series of investigations aimed at identifying and defining counseling strategies which assist clients in developing internality. The investigations at Penn State were conducted as pilot studies in group process. These studies were not conducted as traditional exPeriments but utilized clinical observations and quasi-experimental designs, using experimental groups as their own control. The subjects were college students, professors and administrators from a large state university who attended a three-day group weekend. In all there were 127 participants divided into nine T-groups. The counselors synthesized and applied Rogerian relationship variables, reinforcement counseling, traditional T-group work, and Reality Therapy. Results indicate significant shifts in the direction of internality on the part of the participants, as measured by the Rotter E-I scale with females registering the least amount of change. (Author/HMV)

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A COMPOSITE COUNSELING STRATEGY

for Developing Internal Locus of Control Orientations and Success Expectancy

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I. Introduction

A persistent dilemma in counseling and therapy situations is the individual client's initiative for controlling or not controlling what becomes of him. Personal responsibility for the results of one's own behavior emerges as a significant objective in a helping relationship. Many theorists and clinicians (Rogers, 1961; Berne 1972; Perls 1965; 1969a, 1969b; Ellis 1973; Dreikurs 1957; Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs 1965) emphasize the client as the person most in control of events which occur in his life and subsequently responsible for the social payoffs he receives. This concept of personal responsibility is essential to a person seeking to lead a productive life on a spontaneous, autonomous level as a fully-fucntioning or self-actualizing individual. A powerful and relevant social learning concept, locus of control expectancy, seems to be functionally related to the many theoretical allusions to personal responsibility.

Internal-External Locus of Control refers to the extent to which persons perceive contingency relationships between their actions and subsequent outcomes. Those who believe they have some control over payoffs in their lives are called "Internals". "Externals" on the other hand, believe consequences are directed by agents outside of themselves. Given this concept - control expectancy - an operational construct of counseling is identified.

The primary initiative or action-oriented function of a counselor becomes one of helping the client shift from an External to an Interal locus of control orientation. Conditions must be created within which a client can engage in self-exploration, can realize self-directed success and become aware of the relationship between her behavior and the payoffs she receives.

The external individual constitutes a difficult counseling problem because he tends to minimize the relationship between his own behavior and consequences or payoffs. Rotter (1966) hypothesized that the impact of social reinforcement would depend upon the extent to which individuals could relate their own behavior to the reinforcement. From the point of view of Williams (1970) locus of control

as a social learning variable can best be manipulated in a group setting. "External" individuals, believing payoffs are random and arbitrary require the impact of group involvement, confrontation and support to maximize social learning.

II. METHOD

Beginning in 1968 on the campus of Penn State University and continuing through to the present, the author has assisted in or conducted a series of investigations aimed at identifying and defining counseling strategies which would assist clients in developing internality. The investigations at Penn State were conducted as pilot studies in group process continued over a three year period. Similar studies were conducted at Southeastern Community College, Whiteville, N.C., over the three year period from January 1972 through May 1975. These studies have not been conducted as traditional experiments but have utilized clinical observations and quasi-experimental designs - using experimental groups as their own control. Subjects have been both voluntary (Penn State) and part of a systemmatic program for high risk students (Southeastern). However, the counseling methods - individual and group - have a definite pattern or process.

Most counseling methods may be effective in directing a client towards internality. However, a harmonious composite of several techniques established by research have proven to be most useful. The writer is a Reality Therapist, but for training the group leaders in each study an expanded reality therapy model was used.

Reality therapy itself is an interesting composite of several

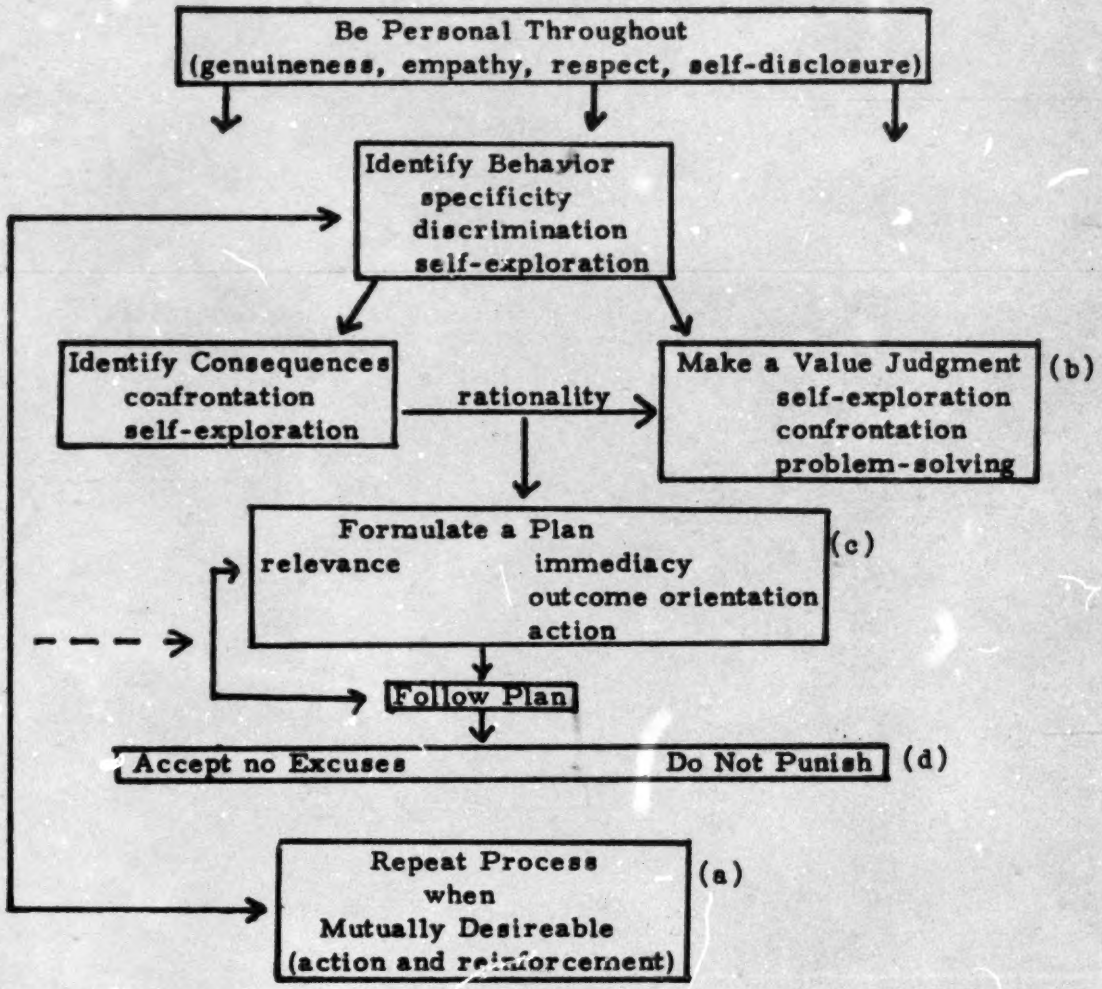
counseling techniques, including Behavior Modification, Rogerian Counseling, Transactional Analysis, Rational-Emotive Theory and Existential Counseling. Glasser's model depicts a six-phase process beginning with personal involvement between helpers and helpees (Phase I); moving on to focus upon behaivor (Phase II); then on the payoff (Phase III); calling for a value judgment -- is that what you wnat? (Phase IV); to asking for a plan (Phase V); and finally to providing for follow-up and replanning if necessary (Phase VI). This process can be effectively supplenented, particularly in a group setting by:

(a) Rogerian and Carkhuff Relationship variables: of genuineness, sincerity, empathy, discrimination, respect, specificity, confrontation and self-disclosure; and

(b) Traditional T. Group methodology.

See Figure 1 for a graphic presentation for these processes, as taught to the group leaders and generally followed. The process was a good illustration of the positive effects that are achievable with a composite counseling strategy, aimed at creating an internal locus of control. This process can best be comprehended by an actual example from the Penn State study (Williams, 1970).

FIGURE I*



a) All parties concerned mutually determine the helping relationship. The facilitative process continues or terminates at the option of all concerned persons.

b) A necessary part of information gathering.

c) Essential in this step is the process and event of obtaining a contract or commitment.

d) It is true that sometimes an aversive consequence that is applied by a counselor will work. However, in the example when the counselor said "Bull!", the confrontation was not to be punative but to initiate a search for a more suitable coping process or personal control over consequences. Punishment per se is vastly overworked and misused in the lives of failing people and in general is useless for the longer-term internalization of self-discipline which is sought in developing internal locus of control orientations. Soloman, in an experiment in avoidance learning with dogs, used lights as a signal that preceded a shock on an electric grid on which the dogs were standing. To the casual observer, the dogs (after training) had a phobia about lights. Similar circumstances surround failing persons in school.

(d) (continued)
If school personnel ridicule students for absurd behaivor, neither the school personnel or the student will understand the old payoffs. A client cannot associate behavior and good payoffs if the old learning and payoffs remain obscure.

* See Figure 2 (below) for a closely related process model.

FIGURE 2: Steps in the Behavior Change Process

Step One	Identify the behavior that you wish to eliminate and identify the new behavior that you wish to strengthen; hold a conference with the student.
Step Two	Obtain suggestions from the student about ways to change her behavior; Explain your own objections to her behavior; offer your own suggestions; consult the guidance services.
Step Three	Identify the possible reinforcers for the undesirable behavior and determine who or what is providing the reinforcement for the undesirable behavior.
Step Four	Decide upon a reinforcer that you think will strengthen the new behavior, and withhold the reinforcer for the undesirable behavior (extinction) or suppress the old behavior. (The difficult challenge is to identify reinforcers that you can control.)
Step Five	Shape the new behavior.
Step Six	Maintain the new behavior by using positive reinforcement, moving from a continuous reinforcement schedule to an intermittent reinforcement schedule.
Step Seven	Reshape the new behavior (if the old behavior recurs) and/or re-examine your past actions in the behavior change process.

III. THE PROCESS MODEL AT WORK

The subjects were college students, professors and administrators from a large state university campus, who attended a three-day group weekend. The weekends were designed primarily to enhance individual problem solving and to encourage personal growth. As a secondary factor they were developed to establish communication and problem solving between students, administrators and faculty members. In all there were 127 participants divided into nine T-groups. The findings were based on the 90 participants who completed both pre- and post-test measures. The counselors synthesized and applied Rogerian relationship variables, reinforcement counseling,

traditional T-group work and Reality Therapy.

The following experience of one of Williams' participants illustrates a successful process model which will facilitate E-I shifts. Her case was chosen to illustrate the essential components of a meaningful composite counseling strategy operationalized in a group setting. As indicated by research findings, this process will aid in facilitating clients to acquire a greater sense of internal control and success expectancy.

A young woman, a junior in college, presented herself to the group as tired, bored with life, and unable to control events in her life. She had just been informed she would be appointed as a dorm counselor for freshman girls for the following academic year, and she was experiencing anxiety about taking on the position. Disclosing that she had very little confidence about being able to succeed at the dorm job, she indicated she wasn't even sure "they" would let her stay in school another year. She also indicated to the group that her academic record had been borderline, and that she had great difficulty organizing her time and her life in general. She further reported that her boyfriend was always pushing her for sex. Although she wanted to maintain his friendship, she didn't like feeling she could not turn him down. She hated feeling he was in control, and was using her for his own selfish purposes.

After the group had been operating for approximately six hours, the members had developed mutual trust and interpersonal attraction and were comfortable giving each other feedback. The young woman introduced the first experience of individual problem-solving by making the comment that for a couple of years she had been wanting to read The Harrad Experiment. She did this on the first day of group sessions, as the group was preparing to

break for the night.

The group leader had been gradually building rapport with the young woman. When she made the statement about her two-year desire to read the book without being able to get around to it, he said, "Bull! If you really want to read that book, you will make a decision now to read it and develop a plan to do so." As it sometimes happens in groups, if the intervention is timely and the client indicates readiness for change and some trust and mutual confidence is operational, several of the group members will be supportive and encourage making a plan. One member asked, "If you want to read the book, why don't you start it?" Another said, "Yeah, it's really your decision, what do you want to do for yourself?" "Why don't you read one chapter and come back and tell us about it in the morning?," suggested another. The leader was delighted with the group's challenge and general support of the suggested plan. The girl responded with, "All right, I'll accept your challenge. I'll read a chapter tonight, and I'll let you know how it goes." Her decision, albeit suggested by the group, was the beginning of a very exciting series of events for her. She was a student at a relatively respectable state institution, had been around many dorm counselors, roommates and parents, and was into the experiences most college students go through. Her way of operating had been more or less fatalistic. She had very little conscious self-direction in terms of setting goals for herself or pursuing those goals. She had not realized the rewards of personal decision making and self-directed effort. Furthermore, she had failed to perceive contingency between her actions and the resultant reinforcements, both positive and negative.

The next morning when the group reconvened, she volunteered enthu-

siastically that she had picked up The Harrad Experiment and read not only one but four or five chapters and found the content to be "fascinating". What was more exciting for her was she had a sense of having made a decision and having succeeded in carrying it out. She began to realize that she indeed was in control of her behavior and resultant consequences. She was discovering a truth she had hidden from herself for many years. She could control her behavior to achieve desired payoffs. The group was very supportive and warmly rewarded her for keeping her contract by carrying out her plan.

With her participation, the group continued for several hours, being supportive, raising questions, and being helpful from time to time with other group members. About 7:00 p.m. on Saturday evening the second day, she began to talk about her boyfriend, whom she really loved. A veteran, seven years older, he was a fairly sharp individual who had participated in several of these weekend groups. He supported her attempts at personal growth. She decided to share with the group her concerns about her relationship with her boyfriend--the fact that she loved him, but at the same time she seemed unable to control things that happened between them, particularly in the area of sex. Her sexual involvement with him left her with a sense of being used, rather than being an active or fully participating partner. The group asked her what she felt were the consequences of her "round heels" behavior. She indicated that after each experience she felt a loss of self-respect and of respect for her boyfriend. She was asked if she wanted to make a plan, and she answered "yes". The group discussed with her some things she might attempt to do. She decided her plan would be to confront her boyfriend with her real feelings about his dominating manner and her inability

to negotiate her own role in the relationship. After considerable discussion of the matter, with the support and suggestions from all group members, she determined to confront her boyfriend that night with her feelings and negotiate a new relationship with him. The group leader was a little concerned with the complexity of the task she wanted to tackle and wondered if her plan was not outstepping her interpersonal skills. However, he did not voice his concern. The next morning the group leader was pleasantly surprised by a very happy young woman who had not only confronted her boyfriend but who had started negotiating a more equalitarian relationship with him in the context of mutual problem solving.

Verification of the effectiveness of the confrontation came later in the morning for the group leader. Her boyfriend, who was participating in the weekend experience in another group, sought out the group leader and confronted him with, "Say, what are you doing with my girl?" The group leader had had the boyfriend in an earlier group session, and the two of them were pretty good friends. The group leader was able to challenge the boyfriend about the whole issue of what kind of a relationship he wanted to have with women. Did he want a partnership or did he want a relationship in which he could play a dominant role and his girl would play a submissive, often unhappy, role? The boyfriend never answered directly. He admitted he could recognize what the problems had been and returned to his own group. Clinical observation of mutual problem solving suggests the best approach to problem solving is involving the other party in the problem solving and contract negotiation process.

Saturday evening passed and the next time the woman participated in the group was Sunday afternoon, shortly before the group was to end. She was talking openly about what she was going to do to become an active dorm

counselor and floor manager, about how overwhelmed she had felt about the task, but now how much confidence she had that she could do the job well. The group ended with the usual kinds of tearful good-byes and promises that everybody would be getting together again, and everyone went their separate ways.

The group leader, however, took time to do a detailed follow-up over a period of two years. What had happened in the life of the young woman? She came back to school the next fall and took over her job as a dorm counselor. She was an active counselor and floor manager. She took charge of her studies, made the best grade point average since she had been in college, and was actively involved with the same boyfriend. After the two year follow-up, the group leader lost contact with her, but about a year later received a wedding invitation from the two of them. At last contact, the group leader was aware of two reasonably happily married persons.

This case is a dramatic one, from the perspective of the group leader -- the change being rather significant. The key to the change is that the woman agreed to the decision in which she participated to read one chapter of a book. This decision had a domino effect on her life in terms of helping her to discover that she could make her own decisions, plans, and subsequent actions, and thereby control resultant payoffs.

The possible generalizability of the control expectancy variable appears to offer powerful inroads into areas of increasing one's control over one's life. This does not imply a cause-effect relationship but the clinical observations are most intriguing. Through a behavior-contract she read a chapter, which led to three more chapters, which in turn led to more positive and functional (for her) relationships with her boyfriend, her school

work, and her job. Through verbal reinforcements or conditioning, the group stimulated behavior on her part which in turn resulted in a series of meaningful payoffs for her. Empirical analysis of the data on all 90 participants was also significant.

IV. RESULTS

The Williams (1970) study reported significant shifts in the direction of internality on the part of the participants, as measured by the Rotter E-I scale. Research has indicated the multi-dimensionality of Rotter's scales, as well as its relationship to social desirability response bias. Nevertheless, in Williams' sample group, the average mean differences for all participants -- faculty, staff, graduate students, males, females and undergraduates -- were nearly two scale scores on the Rotter. The differences between the group on their pre- and post-test conditions were significant, below the .0005 level. In other words, the chances of this great a difference occurring by chance alone were about 5 out of 10,000. Females seemed to make the slightest amount of change. However, previous research suggests that females' scores show a higher correlation with the Marlowe-Crowne Scale for Social Desirability. Internality in females correlates with social desirability. Thus, social desirability could be a factor contaminating these results. The population represented by Williams' sample, included many students who were in a large state university and from a somewhat traditional culture in which women are expected to play a subordinate role to men. Quite possibly the group experience sharpened these traditional role concepts.

Seeing such powerful empirical results reflecting the progress students made during this single three-day weekend was exciting. Clinical observa-

tions of the group were even more exciting than the research data. Not all group leaders were trained or skilled in reinforcement counseling or Reality Therapy. However, a competent Reality Therapist trained many of the group leaders, and had trained them in the basic Reality Therapy approach, with emphasis on making simple plans where the probabilities of success were high. For example, in the case of the young woman, getting her to agree to read one chapter was a good behavioral contract.

V. DISCUSSION

What was really happening with a majority of these participants? After approximately twenty or twenty-two hours of intensive group work with skilled group leaders who emphasized involvement (interpersonal attraction), focused on behavior and its contingencies (payoffs), facilitated client value judgements and decision making, jointly developed plans which would effect changes desired by the client, and established behavioral contracts, clients were experiencing an increased sense of being able to control the payoffs in their lives. Most participants were willing to attribute to themselves more control over positive and negative reinforcements (payoffs) in their day to day lives. Rotter's concept (1966) of control expectancy appears responsive to client success in making behavior changes and achieving personal growth.

VI. SUMMARY

From the point of view of Williams (1970), "locus of control" as a social learning variable can best be manipulated in the group setting. Individuals who believe that contingencies are controlled by chance, powerful others, fate, or the unpredictable probably require the impact of group involvement

to maximize social learning.

Had the young woman who was challenged to read a chapter of The Harrad Experiment remained externally oriented she probably would have floundered academically through her senior year. She may have become a mediocre dorm counselor. She might have married her boyfriend, but inevitable stressful situations likely would have perpetuated her feelings of helplessness and increased her feelings of despair and failure. Fortunately, she became more "o.k." with herself as she assumed greater responsibility for self-determination and self-realization.

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